

In 1995 America led a new effort to aid the Iraqi people. After refusing the proposal for a year, Saddam finally accepted U.N. Security Council Resolution 986, which permits the sale of oil for food. Then he engaged in delay and bureaucratic wrangling for yet another year before allowing the resolution to take effect.

Perhaps worst of all, Saddam deliberately and repeatedly delayed the pumping of oil, which held up shipments of food and medicine to the Iraqi population. Even so, the international community has managed to deliver to the Iraqi people more than 3 million tons of food.

Just as Saddam deprives his people of relief from abroad, he represses them at home, brutally putting down the uprisings of the Iraqi people after the Gulf war, attacking Irbil in 1996, and draining the marshes of Southern Iraq.

Saddam's priorities are painfully clear: not caring for his citizens but building weapons of mass destruction and using them—using them not once but repeatedly in the terrible war Iraq fought with Iran, and not only against combatants but against civilians, and not only against a foreign adversary but against his own people. And he's targeted Scud missiles against fellow Arabs and Muslims in Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain.

Now, he is trying to rid Iraq of the international inspectors who have done such a remarkable job in finding and destroying his hidden weapons—weapons he himself promised in 1991 to report and help destroy. If Saddam is allowed to rebuild his arsenal unchecked, none of the region's children will be safe.

America is working very hard to find a diplomatic solution to this crisis Saddam has created. I have sent my Secretary of State, my Defense Secretary, and my Ambassador to the United Nations literally around the world to work with our friends and allies. If there is a way to resolve this peacefully, we will pursue it to the very end.

But from Europe to the Persian Gulf, all agree on the bottom line: Saddam must allow the U.N. weapons inspectors to complete their mission with full and free access to any site they suspect may be hiding material or information related to Iraqi weapons of mass

destruction programs. That is what Saddam agreed to as a condition for ending the Gulf war way back in 1991.

Nobody wants to use force. But if Saddam refuses to keep his commitments to the international community, we must be prepared to deal directly with the threat these weapons pose to the Iraqi people, to Iraq's neighbors, and to the rest of the world. Either Saddam acts, or we will have to.

Saddam himself understands that the international community places a higher value on the lives of the Iraqi people than he does. That is why he uses innocent women and children as human shields, risking what we care about—human lives—to protect what he cares about—his weapons. If force proves necessary to resolve this crisis, we will do everything we can to prevent innocent people from getting hurt. But make no mistake: Saddam Hussein must bear full responsibility for every casualty that results.

To all our Arab and Muslim friends, let me say America wants to see a future of security, prosperity, and peace for all the people of the Middle East. We want to see the Iraqi people free of the constant warfare and repression that have been the hallmark of Saddam's regime. We want to see them living in a nation that uses its wealth not to strengthen its arsenal but to care for its citizens and give its children a brighter future. That is what we'll keep working for and what the people of Iraq deserve.

NOTE: These remarks were videotaped at approximately 4 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House for later broadcast, and they were released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 20.

### **Statement on the Northern Ireland Peace Process**

*February 20, 1998*

Today's decision to suspend Sinn Fein from the Northern Ireland peace talks shows that the UK and Irish Governments are committed to an inclusive process but one that reaffirms that it is unacceptable to mix politics and violence.

Peace in Northern Ireland is best served if all the political leaders of Northern Ireland

work to find common ground to make common cause for peace. The United States stands with those who support peace and against those extremists on both sides who will use all the means at their disposal to sabotage a peaceful settlement that the vast majority of both communities, and countries, support. I call on Sinn Fein to take the necessary steps to rejoin the talks and for all parties to reject violence and demonstrate in word and deed commitment to the Mitchell principles that exclusively peaceful means are the only way forward.

### **Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting Proposed Budget Rescissions**

*February 20, 1998*

*Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)*

In accordance with the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act of 1974, I herewith report 24 proposed rescissions of budgetary resources, totaling \$20 million.

These proposed rescissions affect programs of the Departments of Agriculture, the Interior, and Transportation.

Sincerely,

**William J. Clinton**

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Albert Gore, Jr., President of the Senate.

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### **Digest of Other White House Announcements**

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The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

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#### **February 13<sup>1</sup>**

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with President Soeharto

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<sup>1</sup> This material was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

of Indonesia concerning implementation of economic reforms in Indonesia.

Later in the evening, the President had telephone conversations with the following foreign leaders concerning the situation in Iraq: Prime Minister Poul Rasmussen of Denmark, Amir Jabir al-Ahmad al-Jabir Al Sabah of Kuwait, Amir Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa of Bahrain, Prime Minister of Jean-Luc Dahaene of Belgium, Chancellor Victor Klima of Austria, Prime Minister Jenny Shipley of New Zealand, King Hassan II of Morocco, and Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom.

#### **February 16**

In the evening, the President and Hillary Clinton returned to the White House from Camp David, MD.

#### **February 17**

In the morning, the President went to the Pentagon in Arlington, VA, where he met with Secretary of Defense William Cohen in the Secretary's office.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. Later, he had separate telephone conversations from the Oval Office with United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan and King Hussein I of Jordan concerning the situation in Iraq.

In the evening, the President attended a college basketball game at the MCI Center.

#### **February 18**

The President announced his intention to appoint Gen. Larry Welch as Chair and Gen. Robert C. Rutherford and Frederick L. Frostic as members to the Panel To Review Long-Range Air Power.

#### **February 19**

In the morning, the President traveled to Baltimore, MD, and in the evening, he traveled to Newark, NJ. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate George McGovern to be U.S. Representative to the United Nations Agencies for Food and Agriculture, with the rank of Ambassador.

The President announced his intention to appoint Dr. J. Michael Bishop as Chair of the National Cancer Advisory Board.